

# A Bumper Spring Crop Bears Fruit

Directors sprout  
from varied roots,  
grow into  
prominence

A SHOOT Staff Report

The mix represented in *SHOOT*'s spring 2011 installment of the ongoing Up-and-Coming Directors series breaks down like this:

- A pair of editors whose spec work as a directing duo is fast gaining notice.
- Another still active editor who has branched out into directing not only commercials but a 40-minute documentary which debuted earlier this year at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.
- An accomplished ad agency entrepreneur/creative director who has made a successful transition to directing with two series of web shorts for real-world clients—and who just landed his first career production company roost.
- A choreographer turned stylist and recently turned director who has scored high marks for her spec fare.
- And a director whose spool of a noted music video became an Internet sensation, leading to her being tabbed as a viral video expert speaker at the TEDxObserver Festival in London.

While each filmmaker has made career headway through different means, they share the common bonds of inspiration, aspiration, talent and a penchant for collaboration. Here are their backstories.

## Greg Bell

A youthful veteran with an accomplished creative pedigree—spanning such agencies as Cliff Freeman and Partners, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (GS&P), and Venables Bell & Partners, the latter being the San Francisco shop he co-founded (with Paul Venables, his creative compatriot at GS&P)—Greg Bell successfully embarked on a directorial career last year, well before he ever signed with a production house.

Just weeks ago, he got around to formally joining his first career production company roost, Epoch Films. And he brings to that studio a pair of notable, web buzz-generating projects he directed in 2010: a series of five short films for Google's Nexus Smartphone with the Android operating system, and another five for Logitech's Google TV box. Both client-direct jobs came through Bay

Area hybrid production/post house TEAK headed by Greg Martinez, a former colleague of Bell at GS&P.

"Greg is one of the kindest souls in the business," related Bell. "When I told him last year that I wanted to direct, he connected me with a couple of his clients. The first job sprung from a short I wanted to direct about a guy pinned under a vending machine. Greg told me that he had a client looking for branded content ideas like that to promote a new phone."

This translated into the Google Nexus Smartphone series of web shorts in which an exec, angry that the candy bar he paid for is stuck in a vending machine, tugs a bit too hard on the machine, which topples over and traps him on the floor of the office lunch room. Over the ensuing weeks, he continues to do business in that horizontal position thanks to the capabilities of his handy Smartphone. Also enabling him to function in this manner are enough food in the vending machine to sustain him, and his agreement not to sue his employer for the workplace mishap.

The offbeat comedic series of short films includes one in which from under the vending machine he interviews and rejects an applicant for the job of his personal assistant. It turns out that most of the applicant's prospective tasks are being performed by the Smartphone.

At the time Bell was in post on this project, he landed the Logitech job which he shot and completed prior to the wrap of the Smartphone series. Bell came up with humorous creative for Logitech under the condition that he get to direct the work. This campaign too became a viral success with a premise of a TV set coming to life and yearning for web connectivity.

As for Bell's directorial yearnings, he harbored such aspirations for some time but they got lost in the shuffle over the years given his agency workload. During his tenure at GS&P from 1997-'01, for example, he served as a group creative director working on such accounts as the California Milk Processor Board ("got milk"), Po-



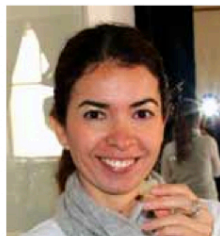
# UP-AND-COMING DIRECTORS



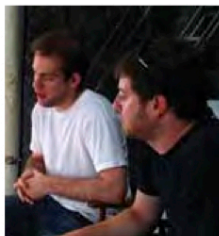
Greg Bell



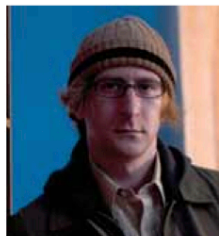
MJ Delaney



Jeannette Godoy



Brian Neaman (r) and Michael Southworth



Jamie Stuart



Doug Walker

laroid, Budweiser, Hewlett Packard and Discover Card. In '01, he left GS&P to launch Venables Bell & Partners which made a rapid ascent with clients including HBO, Audi, Intel, Napster, Barclays and the Coca-Cola Company.

However, a catalyst which got Bell to thinking ultimately about a career change came unexpectedly. He had a serious snowboarding accident, resulting in five cracked ribs, a punctured lung and two cracked vertebrae. Daily mundane tasks such as driving to work became painful.

"I started to question the importance of most of my agency meetings," he recalled. "Were they worth going through excruciating pain for?"

So in '09, Bell left the agency which still bears his name and began pursuing a directing career the next year in earnest. Asked why he hadn't directed at all while he was on the agency side, Bell explained, "I thought that would be a strange imposition to put on my creatives, to shoot their work. And my relationship with the client would also become quite different, certainly very different from a director who's independent and working with an agency and client."

Still, Bell observed that his agency years represented his film school.

"I was able to observe the talent, techniques and tools of an incredibly diverse range of directors. In the average year I'd log more shoot days than the average director, make hundreds of casting decisions, and maybe most importantly supervise editing and post. Editing is so crucial to understanding filmmaking. It's unbelievable that here in the U.S. directors often don't get to see a project through the editing process."

Bell's creative wherewithal should also serve him in good stead as conceptual opportunities arise as the menu extends beyond broadcast :30s into other varied, still evolving forms. "It's an exciting time to be part of the advertising and filmmaking community. With people's attention fragmented across a number of different screens, content is needed that almost demands attention. I think this will help spur a creative renaissance."

## MJ Delaney

In her young career, MJ Delaney—who's handled by The Love Commercial Production Company, London—has

already left a significant viral impression, having directed and co-written last year's "Newport" ("Ymerodraeth State of Mind") video, a witty tongue-in-cheek send-up of the Alicia Keys/Jay-Z New York-themed hit "Empire State of Mind."

Instead of the Big Apple, Delaney's video pays homage to the South Wales town of Newport. More than 2.5 million people watched "Newport" in just a couple of weeks before EMI lawyers had YouTube take it down. The Internet hit earned Delaney a speaker's gig addressing what makes video viral at the TEDxObserver Festival of Ideas earlier this month in London where she shared the stage with innovative, inspiring minds spanning such areas as medicine, fashion and politics.

Prior to her TEDxObserver appearance, Delaney made her commercial debut with an Aldi Supermarkets campaign for McCann Manchester. The Love-produced package includes a charming, gently humorous spot featuring Amelia, a girl who likes tomato sauce (but not boys). The commercial is one of eight that will run throughout 2011.

"We really struck gold finding Amelia who is a fantastic little girl," said Delaney. "It was all about the kid and we saw about 300 before we found her."

Delaney took a bit of a circuitous path to filmmaking. After studying at Pembroke College Oxford, she started out as a journalist on *shortlist magazine*, enjoyed the job but not working in an office. She saved some money, went traveling to the U.S., Japan and South America, and returned to London as a freelancer, primarily in fashion and culture journalism. She moved into styling with a first job at MTV, then worked for the Disney Channel. While on shoots, Delaney was drawn to the director's chair so she started making films funded by her freelance writing.

A pivotal film for her was *Deaf, Dumb and Blind* for a "Black America" exhibition at Shoreditch Town Hall in late 2009.

The film caught the eye of Phil Dupee, Love's managing director, who commissioned Delaney to make a London Fashion Week preview film for fashion 156. The project served as sort of an audition for Delaney at

Love, which subsequently signed her for spots and branded content.

On the longer form front, she is also reprised by United Agents and is currently making a film for Comic Relief as well as the Chris Rock rapumentary film *CBA*.

## Jeannette Godoy

Making her first industry mark as a choreographer for commercials, TV features, concert tours and music videos, Jeannette Godoy is perhaps best known in this capacity for her work on Sir Mix-A-Lot's video "Baby Got Back" as well as the Chris Rock rapumentary film *CBA*.

Godoy also went on to serve as a stylist for both motion pictures and TV spots. Godoy's creative process and discerning eye led many of her director collaborators to encourage her to move into directing.

She made her biggest directorial splash to date with a spec commercial she wrote, "A Boy and His Tire," for Bridgestone, which was included in *SHOOT*'s "The Best Work You May Never See" gallery.

The piece takes us through the life of a young boy into early manhood, starting with his playing on his beloved automobile tire turned swing hanging from a tree. He takes the tire with him everywhere and it's a habit he can't shake.

For instance, we see him seated with the tire at the dinner table as his concerned parents look on. As an older lad, he is a passenger on the school bus, accompanied by the tire.

Years later we see him in the movie theater, seated next to his tire. Other kids throw popcorn at him.

He even takes the tire to the high school prom as his date.

Beltitled and derided as a loser for his tire fetish, one day the tables are dramatically turned when a lovely woman is stranded due to a flat tire on her car. Along comes our boy turned man walking along with his ubiquitous tire. They smile at each other and clearly a romance is sparked—turns out that tire came in handy after all. They speed off together in her sports car convertible.

Godoy said the spec spot concept was inspired by *Lars and The Real Girl*, a feature film—directed by noted spotmaker Craig Gillespie of MJZ—which centers on a delusional young man who enters

into a relationship with an anatomically correct doll he orders online.

The production company on "A Boy and His Tire" was Santa Monica-based Superlounge—launched by director Jordan Brady and executive producer Dave Farrell—which reps Godoy as a director. Superlounge also produced a Nike spec directed by Godoy as well as an upcoming short film she was finishing as *SHOOT* went to press.

Her first taste of directing came in January 2010 while Brady was directing the general market version of a Mazda spot through Doner Detroit.

When a Spanish-language version of the commercial needed to be done, Godoy who was on set as a stylist got the opportunity to direct given her fluency in that language. Through that chance experience, she caught the directing bug.

## Brian Neaman and Michael Southworth

Their main gig: editors at Crew Cuts in New York. Their extracurricular endeavor: directing spec spots which in turn has translated into their garnering helming duties on several real-world assignments.

Among Brian Neaman and Michael Southworth's most recent spec pieces is "Tree," which they conceived, directed and edited.

The spot centers on a talking tree singing about the virtues of the AmazonKindle. Within earshot of this crooning are: a man seated on a park bench next to the tree and reading "Pride and Prejudice" on his Kindle; and a woman walking her dog who at first looks at the singing tree in disbelief. Soon, though, she's bobbing about to the tune, understanding why the tree is grateful for Kindle which helps prevent trees from being turned into paper for books.

A voiceover end tag relates, "Download books in 60 seconds," accompanied by the slogan, "AmazonKindle. A better way to read."

"Tree" earned inclusion into *SHOOT*'s "The Best Work You May Never See" gallery (1/21) as did Neaman and Southworth's Walmart spec piece "Guitar" the previous year (*SHOOT*online, 5/7/10). They entered "Guitar"—which they directed and cut—into a Walmart contest seeking original broadcast commercials pro-

moting the giant retailer.

The spec ad, which wound up winning the contest, was a tug-at-the-heartstrings piece in which a mother talks about what she's saving up for—a real guitar for her young daughter who we see ultimately grow up to become a sought-after musician/performer in concert.

The directing team followed that up with a comedic Bud Light spec commercial, "Jury Duty," which too won an advertiser contest, resulting in Neaman and Southworth earning a trip to Cannes for a screening of the spot.

In the spec piece, jurors immediately believe that the defendant is guilty. But upon being presented an evidence exhibit—a healthy supply of Bud Light—they decide to "deliberate" for a lengthy stretch. Deliberations turn into an ongoing party and result in follow-up jury requests for more evidence.

Southworth related that both the Bud Light and Walmart spec spots were "on brand and consistent with existing creative for those companies." He noted that AmazonKindle's "Free" represented a departure from that approach.

"We set out to do something quirkier, more in line with our sensibilities and not necessarily following what the client had already done," said Southworth. "At first we envisioned the guy talking to a tree that was angry over his reading books and wasting paper. But then Matt O'Dowd came up with the idea of a song sung by the tree. We saw the hilarious potential and once we heard the song, we felt we definitely had something special."

Composer/lyricist O'Dowd, whose day job is as a freelance copywriter (working regularly at interactive agency LBi, New York), has a track record of collaborating with Neaman and Southworth, including on Walmart's "Guitar." Another integral part of the spec team over the past year is executive producer Jeff Roosa, a freelance agency producer (who's active at Digtas, New York).

For "Tree," Neaman additionally served as puppeteer (of the tree) with Southworth handling the role of animator/VFX artist. Not resting on their laurels, the duo followed up "Tree" with a Doritos spec piece involving a wrestler and revenge for a certain someone ab-

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# UP-AND-COMING DIRECTORS

## Stuart's Short Film, Walker's Documentary Break Through

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sconding with a bag of Doritos.

Neaman and Southworth first met as assistant editors at Crew Cuts. Neaman recalled discovering that he and Southworth were quite like-minded and the two struck up a rapport. This led initially to their teaming on Walmart's "Guitar," the success of which fueled further spec spot collaborations.

The duo has also taken on some recent earlier alluded to real-world jobs as directors—both helming and editing a web and in-store stop motion video for the Tassimo Brew Bot out of TBWA\Chiat\Day, New York, and web videos for Kool-Aid via Ogilvy & Mather, New York. (Crew Cuts handled production logistics and finishing for these projects.)

Asked if they harbor directorial aspirations, Southworth and Neaman said their focus is on editing. "We both love editing," affirmed Southworth. "There are challenges and fun in both editing and directing. We'll continue doing both and see where the market takes us and what we can do."

### Jamie Stuart

The December 26th blizzard in New York heated up the filmmaking career of Jamie Stuart whose short chronicling that historic weather, *Idiot With A Tripod*, elicited initial web buzz immediately followed by a glowing review from renowned critic Roger Ebert who pegged the film as being deserving of an Academy Award for best live-action short subject. Ebert's praise of both the film and its director—in part as a fitting homage to Dziga Vertov's 1929 silent classic *Man With a Movie Camera*—triggered a groundswell of interest in Stuart who cited an independent film community person's description of him as being on target: "an overnight success hid-

ing in plain sight for years."

Stuart's hiding place prior to *Idiot With A Tripod* was the independent film scene which—through artistic short films—he adeptly and atypically covered as an online filmmaker/journalist for *Movie City News* and then *Filmmaker Magazine*.

This translated in his getting a Focus Features gig to direct the bulk of its online video promoting the company's motion picture projects, including an ambitious campaign for four films premiering at the Toronto Film Festival, which spanned coverage of the red carpet debut festivities meshed with other elements such as interviews of the directors involved like Ang Lee and David Cronenberg.

Meanwhile Stuart continued to create his own projects ranging from stills to quirky shorts.

Getting his hands on a Canon 7D Mark II inspired him to explore that camera's potential, leading to that fateful inclement day in December.

But that in turn led to much more. "When the attention started, there was no way of predicting how things were going to go," related Stuart who saw *Idiot With A Tripod* characterized in *New York Magazine* as "a beautiful Snowmageddon short film."

"Each day I would think 'that's the end of it' only to be awakened the next morning by the *CBS Early Show* and *The Today Show*," said Stuart. "At a certain point, though, you realize that this has gone far enough and you need to get to a place to better earn a living. I loved the work I was doing but wanted to branch out further as a filmmaker."

A friend of Stuart connected him with Dan Lindau, an executive known for his tenure years back at Crossroads. Now active in the independent film community, Lindau liked what he saw of Stuart's work over the years and then met him shortly after *Idiot With*

*A Tripod* first gained exposure.

Stuart said that he's most grateful to Lindau for his altruism, not only offering advice but reaching out to director Danny Levinson, a principal in Moxie Pictures. Levinson and Moxie CEO Robert Fernandez were in turn impressed with Stuart's talent; they met the director and recently signed him for representation in commercials and branded content.

"Jamie has this really amazing independent film spirit," assessed Fernandez. "He goes out there and does it on his own, puts it all together like he did with *Idiot With A Tripod*. It's no longer just about a production company finding a filmmaker who can do a :30 or a :60. Now what's needed is a filmmaker who can handle communications in every way, shape and form, whether on TV, online or special venues."

Fernandez further noted that *Idiot With A Tripod* underscores Stuart's acumen for connecting with audiences online and generating substantive momentum and buzz for a project. That talent is part of the new currency for a director in today's marketplace.

### Doug Walker

Well known as a commercial editor with a career spanning some 19 years and counting, Doug Walker for the past couple has been moonlighting. It started when his wife, a former producer, bought him a camera. "She told me, 'It's time, you're ready—go out and make some stuff,'" recalled Walker.

"Soon I was taking this camera around with me wherever I went. I remember cutting a job in New York and this one driver would always pick me up at the airport. I found him interesting and did a piece on him and his love for the blues. I then found myself doing the same kind of mini-documentary on a surfer from

Australia, then a fashion designer. I put these three :60s together and had this solid piece of work chronicling real people's lives. I liked the style and the work."

Others did too, including Mirror Films which began repping Walker as a director in June 2009 while he continues to edit at Beast, San Francisco. Via Mirror, Walker has helmed spots for such clients as U.S. Cellular out of Publicis & Riney, San Francisco, the University of North Carolina via Raleigh-based agency Capstrat, and a recent NCAA commercial for Y&R San Francisco.

But Mirror alone does not reflect Walker's growing directorial reach. Via his own Corduroy Films banner, Walker directed *Rhag*, a 40-minute documentary chronicling the life and creations of painter and experimental composer Roy Henry Alexander Grover (abbreviated as Rhag).

*Rhag* was one of four standout films selected for the Special Screenings program at the 2011 Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

Walker directed, shot and edited *Rhag*. He lensed the documentary over six weekends, gathering all the material, finding the right people to provide insights, doing the interviews. He edited at night over a week-and-a-half span.

"This was an education for me. Coming from the commercial world of :30s, with some longer format pieces of a couple of minutes for the web, I remember everyone advising me to make sure my documentary has 'an arc.'"

"But I didn't want to go with just some formula approach," continued Walker. "What I learned is that it's very important to listen to your heart and to go with your instincts. I've been editing my whole life and have a real feel for when things are

flowing and when you're capturing material that will cause audiences to feel something."

While Walker was somewhat of a one-man band on *Rhag*, he tends to turn over the commercials he directs to another editor in order to bring new perspective to his work. Still, though, as a director, Walker provides his own cut to show his vision for the spot.

As for what's next on the directorial front, Walker has in the offing *Lost & Found*, a documentary delving into the stories of some of the most famous surfers of all time. The genesis of this project was his penchant for checking out the Rose Bowl Swap Meet in Pasadena whenever he's down in Southern California on an editing assignment.

One day at the swap meet, Walker came across three boxes containing 30,000 negatives that had been missing, chronicling the 1970s of surfing history. Ever since, in his spare time Walker has been traveling, interviewing the photographers and the surfers to create a mosaic of surfing greatness. Shooting has pretty much been completed, with Walker now trying to edit a wealth of material in his spare time.

So does Walker aspire to ultimately become a director, putting his editing aside? Of his hybrid existence—with editing continuing as being a day job he loves—Walker observed, "Times are changing. I think there's an opportunity to do both. Some of the jobs I've gotten calls on, clients seem excited that I can direct and edit. For that matter, I find myself operating [the camera] on many jobs, at times working with a DP. I've worked on occasion with one DP, two cameras, one operated by me. My wife buying me that camera has had a lasting effect."

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**In addition to the latest NEWS, Best NEW WORK & SHOOT COLUMNS, here's what's coming up in print...**

<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>APRIL 15 ISSUE</b></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Advertising &amp; Entertainment Production Post, Visual Effects &amp; Animation SHOOT Top 10 VFX &amp; Animation Chart Cannes Film Festival Preview Texas &amp; The Southwest Production &amp; Post</p>	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>MAY 6 ISSUE</b></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">SHOOT New Directors Showcase "New Director Profiles" Producers on Adv &amp; Entertainment Issues Cinematographers &amp; Cameras AICE Awards Preview</p>	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>JUNE 17 ISSUE</b></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Cannes Lions Intl. Advertising Fest Preview AICP Show Wrap up SHOOT Directors/Producers Forum &amp; New Directors Showcase Wrap-up Music &amp; Sound Top Ten Tracks Chart</p>
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**Space Deadline:** April 4  
**Ad Material Due:** April 8

**Bonus Distribution:** SHOOT Event, 5/10, NYC; AICE Awards 5/15, NYC; AFCC Locations/Produced by Conf, 6/3-5, Los Angeles  
**Space Deadline:** April 25  
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Print & Online Advertising  
rgriener@shootonline.com  
203/227-1699, ext 13

Classified / Recruitment  
classified@shootonline.com  
203.227.1999 ext. 12

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